

E.T. A LOCAL WAY OF LEARNING

Title: YURU THE GURU STUDIES ECOLOGY

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Environmental Education Team

Grade Level: 5-12

Concepts: 8. Attitudes & Values
10. Economic Planning
12. Stewardship

Disciplines: 1. Art
2. Social Studies
3. Language Arts

Objective:

In conversation or by writing or sketching, students will identify man's relationship to the natural world by selected experiences involving the senses.

Rationale:

In India and the Far East, the people have a philosophy or way of thinking which is different from ours. They wish to understand more about life and what it means. They care less about making money and buying things. Some of these people spend their lives as holy men who think of the most important ideas about life. Often these persons are called Gurus or wise men.

Our friendly Guru, whose name is Yuru, has come to the Virgin Islands to help us think about important ideas. He heard that we are messing up the environment. He discovered that we care too much about making money, buying things, and worrying about what to wear. He thought he could help us get our heads straightened out.

He found that if we don't stop using up the things-of earth so fast, and slow down our way of living, we would run out of things which earth gives us. Today there is a shortage of gas, of oil, of paper, of nice places, of fish, of other food. Land is covered with shopping malls or golf courses and hotels, forests are cut down, marshes are filled, water is polluted. Yuru wants you to think about what this means for you. He wants you to think about what you should do to make the world a good place to live.

Materials Needed:

Drawing and/or note paper
Drawing pad
Pencil

Directions/Activity:

What to Wear:
Old clothes, old shoes or boots, be ready for the weather.

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ACTIVITY #3

Correlating To Man. (3-5 minutes)

Some particular characteristic of the place will serve as a focal point for writing thoughts on note paper. Students should think of the various uses man makes of the item which is pointed out. Notes should include ideas on how man might get along without that item.

Items might be a gut, a windmill, a tide pool, or other water features, or the tree portion of the place, green foliage, animals or animal signs, the sun, litter and other intrusions of man, etc. Be sure to relate to conservation and environmental quality concerns when explaining the activity.

ACTIVITY #4

Nature Recycles. (8-12 minutes)

Students should use the senses of sight, feel and smell to explore old downed trees and logs/stumps. Leaf litter, the soil, the fungi and other plants and animals of decomposition. They should take notes on what they saw, felt, and smelled. They should also spend a few minutes considering man's recycling problems and how his actions compare to nature's.

Students may, at this time, carry on meaningful verbal exchange on the subject but should be separated into groups of 2-3. Notes should be recorded.

ACTIVITY #5

Meditation Break. (about 5 minutes, more for older students)
(A very difficult yet very meaningful activity)

Students should walk to a location where aesthetic quality is high. They should form a single or double line and be spaced about 2-3 meters (6-10 feet) apart. All should face the same direction and sit down on the ground.

All must maintain as complete silence as possible, for the courtesy of others and for the effectiveness of the exercise. Do not use tape at this point.

Each person should spend a few minutes thinking about the life of the place, how the processes of life occur at this site and how important it is for this environment to be conserved if the things encountered will continue.

Midway through the time period introduce the idea of man's effects on wild environment. Have the students consider what man has done to wild places by excess development, by littering, by destructive behavior, by greed.

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Where to Go:

A wild place where man's intrusions are minimal. (A forest, an old field, sea shore, a marsh). A pre-event site visitation by the teacher is necessary for best use of this instrument.

Grouping:

If possible, group size should be 15 or less. The use of aides or especially parents is recommended. Parents and other volunteer help should be pre-trained during a preparation and planning session.

Notation on the use of the exercise:

Students should have previously been exposed to field studies so that the novelty of a first field trip is not a problem. If a period of field activity immediately precedes the activity, this precaution may be disregarded with the teacher's discretion.

Activities:

Note that a variety of activities are given. The teacher may delete one or more if time does not permit.

Preparation of site:

Begin activity with directions for full use of the senses: ears, eyes, nose, touch. Caution students to always be aware, to restrict talking.

ACTIVITY #1

Silent Walk.

Walk silently for 5-10 minutes. Each person should observe (without making a sound) the features of the place. Each should try to see as many of the different parts which make up the environment of the site. Walk slowly. Stop often. Unit leader may silently point to some of the features seen but will say nothing. Students should attempt to remember as much of what they saw as possible.

ACTIVITY #2

Art in Nature. (10-20 minutes)

Each student moves at least three meters (10 feet) apart from each other and within watching distance of the unit leader. The students will make a pencil sketch of specific items as they appear in the immediate view of the student. The unit leader may suggest three or four specific items as available at the site. Suggested items include a large site feature such as a single tree, a feature of the forest floor like a stump or log. A small feature which is easily hand held such as a leaf or mushroom, and perhaps something very small such as a moss, an insect or a feature able to be seen under a hand lens. Older students may combine these features into an overall sketch of an immediate field of view. Sketching should be done silently.

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ACTIVITY #6
(10-15 minutes)

Use a natural opening or amphitheater or other gathering place (best if still in the natural area). Develop a discussion on the meanings gained in the various experiences. Let students consult their notes and sketches. Promote student exchange rather than teacher domination of the discussion. Emphasize values, attitudes, responsibilities. Promote future orientation toward the use of resources.

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Discussion checklist - focal ideas

Wilderness as wilderness

Natural area; "recreation" places for man

Development, what can money buy when this is gone?

Forest conservation practices

Water: needed for life

Recycling our resources

Slow down (the use of resources) to live!

Animals as canaries to man's survival